

CHARLES BROWN

with HJÄRTSLAG

live at Mosebacke

9/17/97



— I'm Gonna
Push On!



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with HJÄRTSLAG — I'm Gonna Push On!

Charles Brown was only 12 years old when he, in the midst of The Great Depression, wrote a song, which he was able to record a decade later, and which in mood and atmosphere gave voice to a common sentiment among black people in America after World War II: "I'm a driftin' and a driftin' like a ship out on the sea" (Drifting Blues).

This was the biggest blues hit of 1945 and it marked the start of a remarkably brilliant career in black music. For 35 years this has been the life of Charles Brown: Drifting from town to town and doing a succession of endless one-nighters in theaters, auditoriums and concert halls as well as weekly or monthly stays at nightclubs and bars. Charles has been able to find new friends and audiences and has made his home wherever he has hung his hat. And while the average rock star has succumbed after a couple of years on the road ending up in need of extensive psychiatric as well as intensive medical care, Charles has avoided to get

caught in the many cul-de-sacs of showbusiness and is today still going very strong looking ten years younger than his birthcertificate shows.

During the -40's and early -50's Charles had no less than 20 R&B-hits. (Only Louis Jordan had more). The songs he has written and recorded form an important part of black city folklore.

He has been called "Mr Black Christmas" and his Christmas blues recordings were the only ones to equal those of his white counterpart Bing Crosby. Since so many of his compositions were recorded by other leading names in music business, such as Elvis Presley, Otis Redding, The Eagles, James Brown, Fats Domino, Bobby Bland, John Lee Hooker etc, Charles finally decided to branch out and give his many European fans a chance to catch the living legend himself in action. Visits by the nobility of the musical world are far and few between, but here he is, The King of the West Coast Blues: Mr Charles Brown!

THE PLANE-CRASH

Things might however have turned out otherwise. On the night before leaving USA Charles dreamt he was in a plane-crash and was the only one saved. On many occasions Charles has had psychic and clairvoyant experiences, so he took this dream seriously. Still he survived, no doubt about it, so he decided to go anyway.

And while sitting comfortably in the jet going from Los Angeles to London he suddenly heard a big bang and saw enormous flames coming up from the motor next to him. It had exploded in fire!

The fire was soon extinguished and with no damage to the plane. But that motor was not working anymore. The captain said: "We have to dump fuel here and go back to L.A. and land." After half an hour of agony all passengers were safely back on the ground again, carefully supervised by the airport's fire brigade.

This incident might remind the rock and roll fan about the almost fatal flight to Australia in 1957 under similar circumstances when Little Richard promised God to stop singing the Devil's music and start preaching instead, if only he was saved. A little later he threw all his jewellery into an Australian river and gave up his musical career. ("I only wished I had caught the fish that swallowed all that glitter", he remarked in later and leaner years while back again in show-business).

Charles on the other hand had already thrown away the millions he had earned on horse racing tracks all over USA so he decided to go. Embarking another plane it all went perfect.

"I used to sing like Charles Brown and Nat King Cole because they were making money...I wanted to make money too. So I tried to copy them" RAY CHARLES.

Charles was born in 1922 in The Deep South, Texas City, Texas. His background is slightly more bourgeois than most other blues artists'. Through hard work and talent he was able to get a college education and worked as a teacher in math and chemistry for a while. Later he went west in search of a brighter future and settled in Los Angeles where his piano-playing and vocalising talents soon were discovered. It was then through his association with Johnny Moore's Three Blazers that his recording career got a flying start and he began to turn out a seemingly endless string of hits.

While his blues songs are as firmly rooted in the blues tradition as for example Muddy Waters' "Got My Mojo Working" or Sonny Boy Williamson's "Fattening Frogs For Snakes", his singing/playing and way of projection put him in the forefront of yet another phase of the evolution of the blues: CLUB BLUES.

Many of his songs dealt with the emotional distress caused by the mass emigration and urbanisation after World War II, without going into details about their social implications such as drinking, drugs, broken homes and crime. Charles focused his songs on the prevailing feelings of despair, loneliness and alienation among the people who had left The Deep South looking for a better future in the ghettos up north or on the west coast. This was blues for people who still hadn't given up hope to achieve the "All American Dream" but deep in their hearts knew that chances were almost non-existent. This was (club-) blues for the rather well-to-do west coast black night club clientele who could easily relate to Charles' smooth, yet emotional delivery, youthful appearance and educated background. He was an overnight sensation and became the undisputed leader in his field.

Charles was a trendsetter. He had listened a great deal to the music of the Nat King Cole Trio. In fact they were good friends and Nat used to come down to Charles' flat at the Lou Baxter residence on 945 S. Normandie in L.A., where The Three Blazers lived, to practice on Charles' piano. He sometimes brought another friend, Frankie Laine. Charles and Frankie started their recording careers together by sharing vocals, and Charles played the piano on the first record that The Three Blazers recorded.

Charles added the blues of Texas to the style of Nat King Cole, using the same format as Nat, a trio. After Charles' phenomenal success many others did so too. A whole generation of blues and R&B artists tried to sound like him and copy his piano playing: Above all Ray Charles, Fats Domino, Amos Milburn, Little Willie Littlefield, Floyd Dixon and many leadsingers with upcoming Doo Wop groups such as The Orioles (Sonny Til), Moonglows (Harvey Fuqua) and Jessie Belvin. Ray Charles started very much as a poor man's Charles Brown with The Maxin Trio. Charles Brown also had some success with straight pop records which crossed over to the white bobby sox audience, thus he was rubbing shoulders with the black pop-idols Billy Eckstine and King Cole.

He was one of the highest paid black artists in USA and was able to help other emerging artists, like giving The Will Mastin Trio with Sammy Davis one of their first well-paid jobs. Charles was married to the beautiful R&B-singer Mabel Scott whom he also made recordings with. When he was at the height of success, he rode the compulsory Cadillac Eldorado. In fact he had four of them; three for the band and the fourth for his valet, his dobermann pincher and himself sporting a silk white gabardin suit, unborn calf shoes and a mink tie. When people saw him they just screamed "Jack, that cat is clean!"

Naturally all good things must come to an end. By the mid -60's the concert halls and auditoriums had shrunk to small clubs and bars. But his name was eternally engraved in the memories of now middle-aged black people.

HOME ON THAT ROCK

On this lp you will hear some of Charles' finest recordings from the last two decades, a period when Charles sometimes has been the unfortunate victim of the five

SIDE 1:

Total Time 20.23

- | | |
|--|------|
| Introduction by Slim Notini | 0.21 |
| 1. TEARDROPS FROM MY EYES (b)
<i>(Rudolph Toombs) Progressive-BMI</i> | 4.20 |
| 2A. BLACK NIGHT (b)
<i>(Jesse Mae Robinson) United Artists Musikförlag AB</i> | 3.40 |
| 2B. PLEASE DON'T DRIVE ME AWAY (b)
<i>(Jesse Ervin-Charles Brown) Aladdin Music-BMI</i> | 4.02 |
| 3. TROUBLE BLUES (a)
<i>(Charles Brown) Travis Music-BMI</i> | 3.10 |
| 4. PLEASE COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS (b)
<i>(Charles Brown) Fort Knox-BMI</i> | 4.45 |

SIDE 2:

Total Time 24.32

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. (I LOVE YOU) JUST THE WAY YOU ARE (a)
<i>(Billy Joel) April Musik AB</i> | 5.25 |
| 2. BAD, BAD WHISKEY (b)
<i>(Maxwell Davis) Belwin-Mills Nordiska AB</i> | 2.52 |
| 3. I'M GONNA PUSH ON (a)
<i>(Charles Brown) Cireco Music-BMI</i> | 4.52 |
| 4. I WANNA GO BACK HOME TO GOTHENBURG (b)
<i>(Charles Brown) Ace Music-BMI</i> | 9.12 |
| 5. I'LL DO MY BEST (a)
<i>(Charles Brown)</i> | 2.06 |

Recorded live at Mosebacke Etablissement, Stockholm.
(a): April 26, 1979, (b): April 27, 1979

Charles Brown vocal and piano on all tracks with HJÄRTSLAG: Rolf Wikström (guitar), Ali Lundbohm (drums), Tommy Cassemar (bass), Peter Caudwell (tenor sax).

Arranged by Charles Brown & Per "Slim" Notini

Engineered by Hasse Andersson
Recorded on H&B Mobile Unit
Re-mix at H&B Studio, Södertälje

Cover design by Lasse Ermalm
Cover photo by Erik Lindahl

PRODUCED BY JONAS BERNHOLM



STOCKHOLM RECORDS
RJ-200 STEREO

I WENT TO THE RACETRACK

The title track I'M GONNA PUSH ON was a blues hit in Texas and on the west coast in the summer of 1968 following the assassinations of Dr Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Although Charles tells that the inspiration for that song came with the death of yet another distinguished American, it very well fitted the mood of that time when other black socially conscious songs like James Brown's "Say It Loud-I'm Black & I'm Proud", The Impressions' "Keep On Pushing" and The Staple Singers' "When Will We Be Paid" began to be recorded. Charles also followed up with Dion's "Abraham, Martin and John" which dealt with these assassinations. Performing "Push On" live on stage Charles gets more space to show his darkly inflected vocals and brilliant piano playing than on the tightly arranged 2 1/2 minute original recording. Charles will never complete a show without doing this number.

BLACK NIGHT has been recorded by other stars like Bobby Bland, Little Milton and Muddy Waters following Charles' charttopper in 1951. For this tour Charles brought back the arrangement that he and his band used on the road and it is slightly different from the original version.

BAD, BAD WHISKEY is a tribute to his longtime friend and musical partner Amos Milburn, who died in early January 1980 after spending the last ten years in a wheelchair. They travelled together and duetted on the original I WANNA GO HOME (1959). Amos was never late to admit that Charles was his biggest musical inspiration.

When introducing PLEASE COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS Charles told the audience how he and Amos shared a flat in Cinninnatti when he was asked by King Records' boss Syd Nathan to write a number that would equal "Merry Christmas Baby". He and Amos went into each others' separate rooms and Charles came up with PLEASE COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS while Amos wrote and later recorded "Christmas Comes But Once a Year". Both songs were released back to back on a 45 which in 1960 became Charles' last real big hit. In 1978 The Eagles picked up the tune and had a Top Twenty smash during the holiday season.

TEARDROPS FROM MY EYES is a Ruth Brown song, recorded in 1950.



Backstage at The ROCK PALAIS. Left to right: Peter Caudwell, Tommy Cassemar, Rolf Wikström, Ali Lundbohm (front), Charles Brown and Slim Notini.
(Photo by Jonas Bernholm)

TROUBLE BLUES was written in 1949 when Charles discovered the dark sides of matrimony. "Oh Lord, divorce, in the Courthouse every day. Process service...coming taking your car...I had to put a dobermann pincher in my yard to keep 'em out of there, but they still fooled me. I went to the racetrack and came back and my grandmother says: "There's a man here wants to see you. He's a guitar-player and he said that you sent for him to come". Evidently I hadn't done so but...When I came in the room he said: "Mr Brown, here is a process about divorce". I had troubles! I'm telling you. He slipped in as a guitar player to get to serve me..."

PLEASE DON'T DRIVE ME AWAY is one of Charles' lesser known songs from the mid-50's.

In later years Charles has worked as a pianist/vocalist in cocktail lounges all over USA. On such engagements he has to play whatever requests the guests might have. But no matter what kind of songs Charles adopts, when he gives them his special treatment they become different numbers. Just listen to Billy Joel's academy awarded (I LOVE YOU) JUST THE WAY YOU ARE.

The encore gives Charles a chance to show off some of his classical piano schooling. As a pre-teenager he was sometimes provoked and called a sissy by the neighbour kids who just couldn't understand why he stayed indoor practising the piano so much. On such occasions his grandmother simply remarked (his mother died at a very early age): "Don't pay no attention to them, Charles, soon they will pay to see you..."

And indeed, she was right.

Jonas Bernholm, Februari 1980.

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RJ-200 STEREO Introduction ©1980 ncb

1. TEARDROPS FROM MY EYES
(Rudolph Toombs) Progressive-BMI

2A. BLACK NIGHT
(Jesse Mae Robinson) United Artists Musikförlag AB

2B. PLEASE DON'T DRIVE ME AWAY
(Jesse Ervin-Charles Brown) Aladdin Music-BMI

3. TROUBLE BLUES
(Charles Brown) Travis Music-BMI

4. PLEASE COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
(Charles Brown) Fort Knox Music-BMI

Total Time 20.23

9/17/97
1899.1



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1. **(I LOVE YOU) JUST THE WAY YOU ARE**
(Billy Joel) April Musik AB
2. **BAD, BAD WHISKEY**
(Maxwell Davis) Belwin-Mills Nordiska AB
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